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## P R E F A C E.



THE study of Biography being one of the most useful and instructive that can be recommended to the attention of Youth, the writer of this little Catechism hopes that his endeavours to render the Lives of the most celebrated Characters of our own Country familiar to them, will not be considered as an unnecessary attempt; for though there have been publications of far superior merit on this subject, yet they have in general been too voluminous to be committed to memory; and the impressions made on the minds of young persons, by simply reading any narrative, however interesting, are in general too evanescent to produce any lasting benefit.

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May 15 1860

# CATECHISM

OF

## BRITISH BIOGRAPHY,

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### CHAPTER I.

*Question.* WHAT is Biography?

*Answer.* A history of the lives of celebrated persons who have distinguished themselves by their learning, their piety, their *patriotism*, their valour, or other eminent virtues, and are therefore held up as examples for our imitation; or of persons notorious for their vices and cruelties, whose actions are exhibited, and their consequences described, in order to deter us from the commission of like crimes.

Q. What advantages arise from the study of Biography?

A. Too many to be here enumerated; for besides those already mentioned, and in addition to the pleasure derived from such a study, we find

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Pat'riotism, s. a love for one's country.



ourselves roused to the imitation of those virtues we so much admire in others: and to detest and avoid those vices which bring down disgrace, misery, and ruin upon their *votaries*.

Q. What is meant by British Biography?

A. The lives of those eminent men who have flourished in our native country, whose actions must therefore be more interesting to us than those of any other part of the globe.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *Alfred the Great.*

Q. WHO was Alfred?

A. He was the younger son of Ethelwolf and grandson of Egbert, under whom the Saxon *heptarchy* was united into one kingdom.

Q. When and where was he born?

A. He was born at Wantage in Berkshire, A.D. 849, and gave early marks of those virtues and abilities, which distinguished his maturer age, and in the end saved his country.

Q. Was much care bestowed on his education?

Vo'tary, *s.* one devoted, as by vow, to any particular opinion.

Hept'archy, *s.* a government in which seven persons rule independent of each other.

A. No ; from the mistaken fondness of his father, his education was so much neglected, that at twelve years of age, he was ignorant of even the *rudiments* of *literature*.

Q. How then did he acquire that learning for which he was afterwards so remarkable ?

A. His mother having taught him some Saxon poetry, he imbibed such a passion for study, that by dint of assiduous application, he not only acquired a facility in reading and writing his native language, but became a *proficient* in the Latin tongue ; which opening new sources of amusement and instruction, afforded him the sincerest pleasure, and enabled him to become one of the brightest ornaments of the age.

Q. By what means did he succeed to the crown ?

A. By the death of his elder brothers : the last of whom (Ethelred) was mortally wounded in an engagement with the Danes, who frequently invaded and ravaged the kingdom.

Q. Did Alfred succeed in repelling these invaders ?

A. He fought many pitched battles with them



Ru'diments, *s.* the first principles of a science or education.

Lit'erature, *s.* learning.

Profi'cient, *s.* one who has acquired a knowledge of any business or study.

and was generally successful ; but fresh swarms continually coming over, his army was at length almost *annihilated*, and himself obliged for a time to yield to the storm.

Q. What line of conduct did Alfred pursue under these distressing circumstances ?

A. He sought an *asylum* for some time with one of his cowherds, to whom he did not think proper to make himself known, and by whom, in consequence, he was not treated with the respect due to his quality. From thence he retired into the Isle of Athelney, in Somersetshire, with a few of his adherents, whom he had collected together, and there waited for a favourable opportunity to recover his dominions.

Q. Did this opportunity soon offer ?

A. After remaining in concealment about a twelvemonth, he heard that some of his followers had routed a body of Danes, killed their chiefs, and taken their sacred standard ; this reviving his hopes, he, in the disguise of a harper, entered the enemy's camp, when his music and witty conversation rendered him so agreeable to the Danish prince that he was entertained for some days without suspicion.



*Anni'hilate*, v. to destroy, or reduce to nothing.  
*Asylum*, s. a place of refuge or concealment.

Q. What followed this arduous enterprise?

A. Alfred finding the Danes careless from their fancied security, attacked them unexpectedly, and obtained a complete victory.

Q. What use did Alfred make of this splendid success?

A. No less generous than brave, he exacted no other conditions from the vanquished than that they should embrace Christianity, and relinquishing their warlike pursuits, betake themselves to agriculture, and the arts of peace.

Q. Did this *lenient* measure answer the desired end?

A. Yes; it secured the peace of Alfred's reign for several years, which interval he employed in repairing the *devastation* committed by his enemies; in erecting fortresses for the security of his dominions; and in forming and equipping a considerable navy.

Q. Did Alfred devote his whole time to those pursuits?

A. No: he divided the kingdom into counties; framed a body of laws which is still in force; built and endowed many schools; introduced and encouraged manufactures; and by his zeal



Le'nient, *a.* merciful, forgiving, softening.

Devasta'tion, *s.* the act of laying waste, destruction.



for naval and commercial enterprise, first taught his subjects the art of defending themselves at home, and the advantages of an interchange of produce and labour with foreign countries.

Q. What was his general character ?

A. He was temperate, pious, and devout ; firm in the administration of justice, but a steady friend to the rights and liberties of his subjects ; in short he was truly a “ Patriot King.”

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## CHAPTER III.

### *Friar Bacon.*

Q. WHO was Friar Bacon ?

A. A celebrated Monk, born in 1214, at Ilchester, in Somersetshire, and educated at Oxford.

Q. For what was he famous ?

A. He employed the leisure, which his profession afforded him, in the prosecution of experimental philosophy : but his extraordinary talents and acquirements served in that dark and ignorant age to awaken envy and *malevolence* ; and

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Malev'olence, s. ill-will, envy, a disposition to hurt.



the illiterate *fraternity* of Monks, unable to brook his intellectual superiority, spread a report, that he maintained an intercourse with the infernal powers of darkness.

Q. What followed on this ?

A. Under this ridiculous pretence, he was restrained from reading lectures, and in the sixty-fourth year of his age imprisoned in his cell.

Q. When and where did he die ?

A. He died at Oxford, in the eightieth year of his age, Jan. 11th, 1294.

Q. What was his character ?

A. He was incomparably the greatest philosopher of his time. His writings are elegant, terse, and nervous, and adorned with exquisite observations on nature. In chemistry he stood unrivalled ; and is supposed accidentally to have discovered the substance now called gunpowder, when making experiments in that science.

Q. Were these acquirements untinged with the superstitions of the times ?

A. No ; he professed a belief in judicial astrology ; gave a receipt to prolong life ; and thought that immortality might be attained by the philosopher's stone.



Frater'nity, *s.* brotherhood, men of the same profession or character.

Q. What may be learnt from this?

A. That the rays of genius will shine forth, even through the darkest clouds; and that the wisest and best of men have their weaknesses, as the sun has its spots.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### *Chaucer.*

Q. Who was Chaucer?

A. A gentleman of respectable family; the father of English Poetry, and the refiner of our language, and one of the brightest and most original geniuses that any age or country has produced.

Q. When and where was he born?

A. Notwithstanding the reputation that he acquired among his contemporaries, and the veneration in which he has been held by posterity, the exact time of his birth is not known; London and Woodstock contending for the honour of having produced such an ornament to the age in which he flourished.

Q. Where was he educated?

A. This is equally uncertain, but that his education was excellent for the age in which he lived, his writings sufficiently evince; and his

genius rose superior to any advantage that might be obtained from scholastic or academic institutions.

Q. What profession did he follow ?

A. He first applied himself to the study of the law, and entered himself a member of the Inner Temple ; but having formed a high matrimonial alliance, he relinquished this pursuit, and entered into the service of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, third son of Edward the Third, by whom he was much esteemed for the sprightliness of his genius, the elegance of his person and manners, and the fertility of his endowments.

Q. What office did he hold at court ?

A. He was the first page to Edward the Third, and afterwards appointed commissioner to treat with the Genoese republic for the hire of some ships ; a duty which he performed much to the king's satisfaction.

A. What was his next employment ?

A. He was appointed guardian to one of the king's wards, and by this and other offices he enjoyed an income of at least a thousand pounds per annum, a very considerable sum in those days ; but having embraced the doctrines of the Reformation his interest immediately sunk, and he became exposed to the malice of his persecutors.

Q. What works have contributed to establish Chaucer's fame?

A. He was eminently successful in every species of versification, from the short and pointed epigram, to the grave and solemn epic. His principal work was entitled *Canterbury Tales*.

Q. When did he die, and where was he interred?

A. He died in London in 1556, aged 72, and was interred in Westminster Abbey, where a monument was erected to his memory.

Q. What was his private character?

A. It appears to have been amiable. Genteel and complaisant in his manners and address, frank and liberal in his disposition, he was at once the fine gentleman, the pleasant companion, and the learned writer.

Q. What may we learn from this sketch?

A. That though court favour and prosperity may delight for a time, true pleasure can be found in retirement and the pursuits of literature alone.

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## CHAPTER V.

### *Cardinal Wolsey.*

Q. Who was Wolsey?

A. Wolsey, who rose to the highest eminence



that a subject could ever attain to, and maintained a splendour and magnificence scarcely equalled by sovereign princes, was the son of a butcher, at Ipswich, in Suffolk, and born in the year 1471.

Q. What education did he receive?

A. His parents being persons of some property, and Wolsey evincing a passion for literature, he was placed at the grammar-school of that town at an early age, and thence removing to Oxford he made such rapid progress in his studies, that he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts before he was fifteen years of age.

Q. What was the first preferment he received?

A. He was presented to the rectory of Ly-mington in Hampshire, and immediately entered on the duties of a parish priest.

Q. How did he discharge those duties?

A. Not with the greatest regularity, as may be inferred from his having once been placed in the stocks—a most disgraceful punishment for a clergyman.

Q. What was his next preferment?

A. He was made chaplain to Dr. Dean, then archbishop of Canterbury, who was extremely partial to him, and brought him into as much notice, as the short time he survived their first acquaintance would permit.

Q. Who was his next patron?



A. Sir John Nephant, treasurer of Calais, by whom he was intrusted with the principal business of his offices, and finally recommended to the king, who put him on the list of royal chaplains.

Q. What was his conduct at court?

A. He assiduously cultivated the acquaintance of the reigning favourites, Fox, bishop of Winchester, and sir Thomas Lovell, by whom he was zealously patronised and recommended to the king, as a proper person, excellently qualified to conduct an important negotiation, with Maximilian, emperor of Germany, who then resided at Brussels.

Q. How did he acquit himself of this commission?

A. The king, surprised to see him present himself before him at the end of three days, began to chide him for his delay in setting out but, to his utter astonishment, finding that he had executed his orders, and supplied an omission of his own accord, to rectify which a messenger was sent after him, whom he met on his return, the king presented him with the deanery of Lincoln. His Highness \* died soon after.

Q. Did Wolsey's promotion cease on the death of Henry the Seventh?

\* The title of Majesty was not then assumed by the king of England.

A. No; Wolsey had worshipped the rising sun, and continued to enjoy the same, if not greater royal patronage than ever. Among other tokens of his master's favour, he was made a privy councillor in 1510, canon of Windsor and registrar of the Order of the Garter.

Q. What further promotion did Wolsey experience?

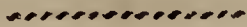
A. The king, being engaged in a war with France, Tournay was taken by his forces, and the favourite was immediately made bishop of that see. In the following year he was promoted to the bishoprick of Lincoln, and then to the archbishopric of York.

Q. Did Wolsey enjoy this *accumulation* of honours with moderation?

A. No; his greatest *foible* was a love of parade and magnificence, by which he drew on himself the envy of the nobility, and reflections on the meanness of his birth.

Q. Was his ambition satisfied with the height to which it had attained?

A. By no means; his haughty behaviour so disgusted Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury, that he resigned the chancellorship, which



Accumulation, *s.* the act of heaping up together.

Foible, *s.* natural infirmity or failing.

was immediately conferred on Wolsey. In this new office he displayed judgment and penetration, and an intimate acquaintance with law and equity.

Q. Did Wolsey enjoy uninterrupted prosperity till his death?

A. No; his fall was as rapid as his rise.

Q. What occasioned this reverse?

A. The king wishing to divorce his queen, and marry Anne Boleyn, Wolsey and Campeggio were appointed by the pope to try the merits of the case; and their decision being greatly *protracted*, the delay was attributed to Wolsey. The first mark of the decline of Henry's affection was his being deprived of the seals of office.

Q. What conduct did he pursue on this reverse of fortune?

A. He caused an inventory to be taken of his effects, which were of immense value, and resigned them all into the hand of the king; he then retired to Esher in Surry, and lived for some time in retirement and obscurity. He afterwards went to York, the capital of his diocese, where he was arrested for treason, and ordered to be committed to the Tower.

Q. Was he confined in that fortress?



Protract', *v.* to put off from time to time.

A. On his way thither he was taken ill, and died at Leicester Abbey, on the 29th of November, 1530, aged 59; some have asserted that he swallowed poison, but there seems no ground for such an assertion. Disappointed ambition, and a dread of what was in reserve for him sufficiently account for the *catastrophe*. He was buried in the Abbey where he died.

Q. What was the general character of Wolsey?

A. It has been so variously pourtrayed by his friends and enemies that it is difficult to discover the truth. His character seems to have contained as singular a variety as the fortune to which he was exposed; and when we consider that the subsequent part of Henry's reign was much more criminal than that which had been directed by Wolsey's councils, we shall be inclined to suspect those historians of partiality who have endeavoured to load the memory of this minister with such violent reproaches. Henry much regretted his death, and always spoke favourably of him.

Q. What may we learn from this narrative?

A. That ambition is an insatiable passion, growing by the food it feeds on; that there is no stability in the favour of princes; and that real

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*Catas'trophe*, s. a dreadful event or accident.



happiness must be sought for in a higher service, namely, the service of God.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### *Sir Thomas More.*

Q. Who was Sir Thomas More ?

A. This great man was the son of Sir John More, one of the judges of the King's Bench ; a man of great virtues and abilities, which seemed in a still more eminent degree to have been entailed on his offspring.

Q. When and where was he born ?

A. In Milk-Street, London, in the year 1480.

Q. Did he give any early presages of his future eminence ?

A. Cardinal Morton, primate of all England, in whose service he was, used frequently to say, " This boy who now waits at my table will prove a wonderful man."

Q. Where was he educated ?

A. At Christ Church College, Oxford, where he distinguished himself by his proficiency in languages, and his progress in science.

Q. What profession did he embrace ?

A. He entered a member of New Inn, and ap-



plied himself to the study of the law, and being called to the bar, he was beginning to acquire a reputation proportionate to his talents, when, conceiving a sudden dislike to his profession, he relinquished it, and lived four years in retirement, engaged in devotion and study.

Q. What ensued on his leaving his retirement ?

A. He married the eldest daughter of a gentleman at whose house he was on a visit, and resumed his practice at the bar with great reputation and success.

Q. Was he an active member of the political world ?

A. He was returned to parliament in his twenty-first year, and distinguished himself much by opposing a subsidy which Henry the Seventh had demanded ; this drew on his family the king's vengeance, but as he could not find a pretence to wreak it on the son, he imprisoned and fined his father for some trifling fault.

Q. Did this intimidate young More ?

A. Quite the reverse ; for his conduct was such, that his enemies could find no opportunity of ensnaring him ; but it rendered him an object of importance in the eyes of the nation.

Q. Was he eminent in his profession ?

A. There was scarcely a cause of consequence in which he was not engaged, and as he always

advocated that side of the question in which he considered the right to lie, the purity of his principles increased his celebrity.

Q. Did he acquire any professional honour ?

A. His abilities and integrity having attracted the notice of the king, he was, though reluctantly, obliged to accept the post of master of requests. Soon after, he was knighted, appointed one of the privy council, and admitted to great familiarity with the king, who was so charmed with his learning, wit, and convivial talents, that he not only consulted him on affairs of state, but frequently invited him to his private parties.

Q. Did these flattering distinctions beget pride and ambition in him ?

A. No; for being entirely devoted to domestic pleasures, which his frequent attendance at court interrupted, he restrained his natural propensity to merriment, that his company might not be in so great request.

Q. Did he experience farther promotion ?

A. Yes: he was successively made treasurer of the exchequer, speaker of the house of commons, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, and lord high-chancellor of all England.

Q. What was his conduct in this exalted station ?

A. The meanest complaint found ready access

to him, no private affection could bias his judgment, or influence his decrees ; and such was his application to business, that at the end of two years there remained not a cause depending, an unexampled circumstance.

Q. How long did he continue in this high office ?

A. About three years : when, disapproving of the measures that Henry was pursuing, he with some difficulty obtained liberty to resign ; and his integrity was such, that, after filling the most important stations for near twenty years, his annual income did not exceed one hundred pounds.

Q. Did he enjoy a long period of domestic privacy and retirement ?

A. No ; for refusing to sanction with his approbation Henry's marriage with Anne Boleyn, and denying the king's *supremacy* in spiritual matters, he was, after a long imprisonment, beheaded as a traitor, A.D. 1535.

Q. What was his behaviour after condemnation ?

A. He employed the interval between his condemnation and execution in taking leave of his daughter, and preparing for eternity. His wit and humour did not, however, forsake him,



and the serenity of his mind was unimpaired even on the scaffold.

Q. Where was he buried ?

A. At Chelsea, where a monument was erected to his memory ; his head was exposed on London bridge for fourteen days, and afterwards deposited in a vault, in St. Dunstan's church, at Canterbury.

Q. What was his character ?

A. He was the patron of every man of science and merit : as a judge, he was most upright ; as a man, truly amiable, facetious, and pleasing ; but in religion, weak and credulous to a high degree. Yet the errors that arise from principle deserve our pity and respect.

Q. What may we learn from these remarks ?

A. That the most perfect integrity and correctness of conduct will not always shield us from misfortunes ; but that a consciousness of rectitude enables us to bear them with fortitude and serenity, as looking forward to a glorious immortality.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *Cromwell, Earl of Essex.*

Q. WHO was Cromwell, earl of Essex ?

A. The son of a blacksmith, at Putney, in Surry.



Q. Did he owe his elevation to his superior education?

A. By no means; as from the poverty of his parents, he merely learnt reading, writing, and a very little Latin.

Q. How did he first emerge from this obscurity?

A. Being possessed of strong natural genius, and considering travelling as the only means in his power for improving his understanding, and enlarging his capacity, he determined on visiting the Continent. At Antwerp he obtained the situation of clerk or secretary to the English factory.

Q. Did he long retain this situation?

A. No; two persons having a suit to Pope Julius the Second, falling into company with Cromwell at Antwerp, and thinking his talents for negotiation superior to their own, prevailed on him to accompany them to Rome.

Q. Did he obtain their suit?

A. Yes; by the following means:—his first care was to discover the weak side of the Pope's character, and finding that he was fond of the pleasures of the table, he presented some curious ellies to his holiness, which so pleased him that he immediately granted the request of the commissioners.



Q. What advantage did Cromwell reap from his travels?

A. None of a pecuniary nature; but he acquired a thorough knowledge of mankind, and an intimate acquaintance with the German, French, and Italian languages, which proved of infinite service to him afterwards.

Q. What was the first step to the high honour to which he afterwards attained?

A. Being by some means introduced to the notice of Wolsey, then in the height of his power, he was soon admitted to an intimacy with the cardinal, and employed by him in many important affairs of a delicate nature, in which he acquitted himself to his master's satisfaction.

Q. Did Cromwell forsake his patron in his adversity?

A. No; he behaved with a fidelity of gratitude, which must endear his memory to every virtuous mind; he strenuously defended Wolsey against the charge of treason; omitted no marks of attention and respect, and soothed his sorrows with the most affectionate assiduity.

Q. Was he not rewarded for this praise-worthy conduct.

A. The king, admiring his grateful behaviour, and noticing his zeal and abilities, took him into

his immediate service, and promoted his interest and fame.

Q. Did not Cromwell rapidly rise to the summit of power?

A. Yes; he was successively made a privy-councillor, master of the jewel-office, clerk of the hanaper, chancellor of the exchequer, principal secretary of state, master of the rolls, keeper of the privy seal, and lord Cromwell! But his most important office was that of vicar-general under the king, who had now assumed the title of "Supreme head of the Church."

Q. What steps did he take for the purpose of introducing a thorough reformation in morals and religion?

A. He began by publishing a few articles of faith, essentially different from those of the Romish church. Next he published a translation of the Scriptures, which before were forbidden to the laity. The Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Commandments, were likewise ordered to be taught in the English tongue.

Q. Did the nation quietly submit to these innovations?

A. On the contrary, insurrections broke out in different parts of the kingdom, and the insurgents demanded the punishment of Cromwell, as the subverter of the laws and religion of the land.

But these disturbances were soon quelled, and Cromwell was created earl of Essex.

Q. Did this prosperity prove permanent ?

A. No ; the very measure which he thought likely to insure its continuance, proved his ruin.

Q. What was that measure ?

A. Henry having lost his queen, Jane Seymour, Essex warmly recommended a union with Ann of Cleves, hoping as this princess was a Protestant, thereby to strengthen his interest against the Popish faction. But Ann proving personally disagreeable to Henry, the Papists embraced the opportunity to inflame his mind against his minister, and he was arrested for high treason at the council-board, by the duke of Norfolk, and immediately conveyed to the Tower.

Q. What was the accusation proved ?

A. The charges were found either so frivolous or false, that he was condemned without being permitted to make his defence.

Q. What was his behaviour at the place of execution ?

A. He avoided all reproaches against his enemies, prayed fervently for the king and the welfare of his country, and then submitted himself to the executioner, who mangled this unfortunate victim in a dreadful manner.

Q. What was the character of Cromwell ?

A. He was courteous in his manners ; exempt from pride and arrogance ; easy of access ; of remarkable affability, and unbounded charity ; kind to his servants and dependants ; a sound politician, and a *good man*.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

*James Crichton.*

Q. Who was James Crichton ?

A. A native of Scotland, born in 1560 ; of such astonishing personal and mental endowments, as to exceed belief, did not the concurrent testimonies of his *contemporaries* establish his fame beyond the reach of contradiction.

Q. Of what family was he ?

A. Of a very respectable one ; his father being lord advocate of Scotland, and his mother lineally descended from the royal family of that country.

Q. Mention some of his most remarkable acquirements.

A. Before he was quite twenty years of age, he had made great proficiency in most of the

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Contem'poraries, s. those who live in the same age.



sciences, and was master of ten languages ; which from his prodigious memory, were nearly as familiar to him as his mother tongue.

Q. Did he excel only in literary pursuits ?

A. He was also without a rival in all corporeal exercises ; for it is said that in fencing he could spring at one bound the length of twenty feet on his *antagonist*, and use the sword in each hand with equal dexterity : he had a firm voice, and great skill in playing on musical instruments. His person was graceful, and his countenance beautiful.

Q. What was the first use he made of these rare acquirements.

A. He fixed a challenge on the gate of one of the colleges at Paris, inviting the learned of that University to a disputation on a certain day, giving them the choice of ten languages, and all the sciences.

Q. Did he not spend the interval in preparing himself by close application to study, for this important moment ?

A. On the contrary, he gave himself up entirely to pleasure or public manly exercises, and frequented the scenes of dissipation so assiduously, that the students of the University wrote



*Antag'onist*, s. one who contends with another.



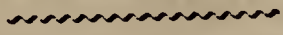
under his own challenge, that the most likely place to find the monster of perfection was at the tavern.

Q. Did he experience a defeat in consequence of this apparently thoughtless conduct?

A. Quite the reverse; for he soon redeemed his character, and covered his *detractors* with confusion. On the day appointed, he attended in presence of three thousand auditors, and after a disputation of nine hours, against four doctors of the church and fifty masters, he silenced them completely, and was presented with a diamond and a purse of gold, amidst the loudest acclamations. On this occasion he obtained the epithet of "admirable."

Q. Did he exhibit any farther proofs of his dexterity in the manual exercises?

A. A prize-fighter, who had defeated the most celebrated masters of Europe, had taken up his temporary residence at Mantua, and had killed three persons who had entered the lists against him. Crichton, wishing to rid the world of such a monster, mounted the stage against him for the stake of fifteen hundred pistoles. Crichton was *eventually* the conqueror, and generously divided



Detrac'tor, s. one who takes away another's reputation.

Even'tually, *ad.* in the event, at last.

his prize among the widows of those who had been killed by his late antagonist.

Q. Did he not obtain any advantageous post in consequence of these wonderful exploits ?

A. The duke of Mantua appointed him preceptor to his son, a prince of dissolute manners and abandoned principles.

Q. Did he perform any thing worthy of notice in his new situation ?

A. He wrote a comedy for the amusement of the court, in which he himself performed fifteen different characters, with such inimitable ease and grace that he appeared each time to be another person.

Q. How long did Crichton enjoy this honourable post ?

A. Though in the bloom of youth, his end was near, for roving about the streets one night during the *carnival*, he was attacked by six men in masks; his courage and skill got the better of his antagonists, who all fled except their leader. He, falling on his knees, begged his life, and removing his mask, discovered the features of the prince his pupil. Instead of merely granting his



Car'nival, *s.* a feast held by the Roman Catholics before Lent.

forfeited life, Crichton restored his sword, which the brutal and ungrateful wretch plunged into his tutor's heart.

Q. What followed this unmerited catastrophe?

A. The court of Mantua testified their esteem for his memory by a public mourning, and for a long while after his picture decorated the apartments of the Italian nobility, representing him on horseback, with a lance in one hand, and a book in the other. He was killed in the twenty-second year of his age.

Q. What was his character?

A. He was certainly one of the most accomplished men that ever lived; but as he wrote little, his fame was chiefly confined to those who witnessed his actions. He blazed like a meteor for a moment, but his glories were not lasting.

Q. What may we learn from the life of Crichton?

A. That it is impossible to say how far an aspiring genius may reach. It teaches likewise those who are blest with humbler gifts, to acquiesce in the dispensations of Providence, as even the most splendid talents could not render their possessor happy, nor shield him from an untimely death.

## CHAPTER IX.

*William Shakspeare.*

Q. WHO was Shakspeare?

A. The most illustrious dramatic bard that England has ever produced, emphatically called the poet of nature, the glory of his country and of his age.

Q. Where was this celebrated man born?

A. At Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire, in the year 1564.

Q. Was he of respectable origin?

A. His father was a considerable woolstapler; but a family of ten children, of whom our poet was the eldest, prevented him from becoming opulent.

Q. What education did Shakspeare receive?

A. He was educated at the grammar-school of his native town; but many have supposed that his acquaintance with the classic authors of antiquity was by no means intimate.

Q. By what means then has he acquired such lasting fame?

A. By the native energy of his genius, and by his accurate knowledge of the human heart.

Q. What was his first outset in life?

A. He married at an early age, a lady of the



name of Hathaway, and engaged in his father's business.

Q. Did those engagements render him steady in his conduct, and domestic in his habits ?

A. From an incident, which, though disgraceful in itself, led the way to his future fame, it appears that the reverse was the case.

Q. What was this incident ?

A. Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecot, had his deer-park frequently robbed by Shakspeare and his unruly companions. For this offence, aggravated by a severe satire on the knight, he was prosecuted with such severity, that he was obliged to take shelter in London from the consequences of his crime. This gentleman he afterwards ridiculed under the character of Justice Shallow.

Q. What employment did he obtain on his removal to London ?

A. At first it appears that he was reduced to hold the horses of gentlemen, who, in those days, rode on horseback to the play ; and by this means having gained a little money, he obtained permission to try his abilities on the stage.

Q. Did he make any great figure in this undertaking ?

A. No ; his celebrity as an actor was by no means great, for it appears that his highest per-



formance was that of the Ghost, in his own tragedy of Hamlet.

Q. When did he first begin to follow the natural bent of his genius?

A. All the thirty-five plays that have been ascribed to him, made their appearance between the years 1589 and 1614. It appears that the "Midsummer Night's Dream" was one of his earliest productions, and the "Twelfth Night" the last.

Q. What was the character of Shakspeare?

A. Though in the early part of his life he evinced an inclination for riot and dissipation, yet in his more mature age he corrected this propensity, and became the kind husband and affectionate father, the agreeable companion, and the valued friend. To wit, fancy, and unbounded genius, he added sweetness of disposition and pleasantness of manners. Thus he was courted by the great, and honoured by the good.

Q. When did this celebrated man die, and where was he *interred*?

A. He died in April, 1616, and was interred in the chancel of Stratford church, where a monument with his *bust*, is erected to his memory.

In'ter, *v.* to put under ground, to bury.

Bust, *s.* a figure of a person, containing only the head, shoulders, and stomach.

Q. What may we learn from his life ?

A. That the ways of Providence are mysterious ; good being frequently produced from seeming evil. Had not Shakspeare been obliged to quit his family for a time, under most distressing circumstances, the finest pictures of life and manners might have been lost to the world.

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## CHAPTER X.

### *Sir Walter Raleigh.*

Q. Who was Sir Walter Raleigh ?

A. A celebrated scholar, courtier, and naval commander, born in the year 1552, at Budley, in Devonshire, of an ancient and respectable family.

Q. What were the early incidents of his life ?

A. Little is known concerning them. He was educated at Oriel College, Oxford, and there distinguished himself by the strength and vivacity of his genius, and his uncommon progress in academical learning.

Q. Did he pursue any learned profession ?

A. He appears to have been inclined to more active pursuits ; as at the age of seventeen, he joined the *Hugonot* army under Coligni, as a

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Hu'gonot, s. a name given by way of contempt to the Protestants of France.

volunteer. In this station he not only initiated himself in the art of war, but acquired a knowledge of the fashionable modern languages, and returned to London, after six years' absence, with every accomplishment that could adorn the character of a gentleman.

Q. Did he resume his military avocations ?

A. After three years, chiefly spent in cultivating the Muses, he joined the Prince of Orange against the Spaniards. The next year he accompanied Sir Humphrey Gilbert on an expedition to North America, and in 1580 he served as a captain against the rebellious Irish; here he so distinguished himself by his intrépide spirit, generous humanity, and presence of mind in danger, that he received a considerable estate in that kingdom, as a reward for his eminent services.

Q. What induced him to quit a service in which he acquired such honour ?

A. An unhappy misunderstanding between him and the lord lieutenant, in which Raleigh defended himself with such eloquence before the privy-council, that, instead of its proving detrimental to him it occasioned his being noticed at court.

Q. What other favourable incident assisted his promotion ?

A. The queen taking the air on foot, happened to come to a miry place, and was hesitating whether or not she should proceed, when Raleigh immediately spread his cloak on the ground, on which the queen passed over without difficulty.

Q. What was the consequence of this gallantry?

A. From a man whose address and person were calculated to inspire favourable sentiments in a female heart, it failed not to make a deep impression; and on his appearing at court soon after, he met with a reception sufficiently flattering to his hopes.

Q. Did Raleigh continue long at court?

A. No; he longed to signalize himself by discoveries in the New World; he settled a colony there which he named Virginia, in honour of his sovereign, and from thence introduced tobacco, the principal produce of that state, into Europe as a luxury: from thence he likewise introduced that truly valuable root the potatoe, which has since become so essentially necessary to all ranks.

Q. Did he prosper in this enterprise?

A. No; that colony not affording any immediate advantage to government, was finally neg-



lected, after all the pains he had taken to form a flourishing settlement there.

Q. What was his next step ?

A. He attempted to establish a new colony which should at once be productive of advantage, and transfer the richest products of America to England.

Q. In what part of America did he propose to establish this colony ?

A. In Guiana, at that time in possession of the Spaniards ; but as he was not disposed to do any thing rashly, he sent an officer of approved skill and fidelity, to gain every necessary information, that proper precautions might be taken to ensure success.

Q. Was the expedition to Guiana ever undertaken ?

A. Yes ; on the 6th of February, 1595, he set sail from Plymouth with a small squadron, took the city of St. Joseph, in the isle of Trinidad, from the Spaniards ; sailed 400 miles up the Oroonoko, and having found indications of gold mines which he had no means of working, he determined on returning to England.

Q. Was this project from that time abandoned ?

A. The ore, fossils, and plates of gold, which



Raleigh brought to England, inclined the nation in general to favour the enterprize; but the cabals of his enemies, and the embarrassments which the queen experienced from the frenzy of the Earl of Essex, threw obstacles in his way during the remainder of that reign; but he still continued to enjoy the favour of his royal mistress.

Q. Was he thus distinguished under her successor, James the First?

A. For a short time he experienced no alteration; but his gallant disposition, and love of military glory, ill accorded with the *pusillanimous* measures adopted by the court. He was therefore deprived of all the offices he had so honourably filled under Elizabeth, and soon after committed to the Tower, on a very improbable charge of treason.

Q. How was he treated?

A. The prosecution was conducted with the most *rancorous* violence. Even the judge on the bench so far forgot his dignity as to salute him with the epithets of "traitor, monster, viper," &c., with others of like nature. But though he



*Pusilla'nimous*, *a.* void of courage, mean-spirited.

*Ran'corous*, *a.* spiteful in the highest degree.

was at length convicted, even against evidence, yet his sentence was suspended, and he was kept a close prisoner for twelve years.

Q. How did he employ himself during this tedious and solitary confinement?

A. In the pursuits of literature, and in composing several works, the principal of which was a History of the World.

Q. What was his fate at the end of this period?

A. He obtained his liberty in 1616, and received the royal commission to explore the mines of Guiana: in July the following year he sailed, but by this delay his designs were betrayed to the enemy, and in consequence frustrated.

Q. What was the consequence of this miscarriage?

A. At the instigation of the Spanish ambassador, he was called before the privy-council, to answer for his conduct in this expedition; and being again committed to the Tower, was, after the lapse of so many years, condemned to die on his former conviction, and was accordingly beheaded in Old Palace Yard, the 29th October, 1618.

Q. What was his behaviour on the scaffold?

A. That of a hero and a Christian; he vindi-

ated his conduct in an eloquent and pathetic speech, and afterwards submitted to the axe with calmness and resignation.

Q. Where is he interred ?

A. In St. Margaret's church, Westminster.

Q. What was his character ?

A. Almost every great quality that deserves the admiration of mankind was united in him. As a soldier, a statesman, and a scholar, he was equally eminent. Learned himself, he was the patron of learning. In short, he seemed to live rather for his country than himself.

Q. What may we learn from this narrative ?

A. That the most brilliant talents, and most incorruptible integrity, cannot always shield their possessor from the attacks of envy and calumny ; that therefore the good man must look for his recompense in a future state.

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## CHAPTER XI.

*John Milton.*

Q. Who was John Milton ?

A. A gentleman of an ancient and respectable family, born in Bread-Street, London, 1608, and whose name is rendered illustrious by his truly celebrated Poem, " Paradise Lost."

Q. Did Milton give any early indications of his future fame?

A. Yes; his application to study, while at St. Paul's school, was so intense, that he there laid the foundation of a disorder in his eyes, that afterwards induced total blindness.

Q. What were the first fruits of his learning?

A. He wrote his celebrated Masque of Comus, in which imagery, *pathos*, and a fervid, but chaste style, decorate every page. His Lycidas, a *monody* on the death of an intimate friend, appeared next; and, it is supposed, that about this time he composed those exquisite poems, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," or Odes to Mirth and Melancholy.

Q. Did he take any part in the political disturbances of the times?

A. Yes; he was a zealous advocate for republican principles, and wrote several tracts on the subject.

Q. How was he rewarded by his party for this zeal in their cause?

A. He was presented with 1,000*l.* and made Latin secretary to Cromwell.

Q. What became of him at the restoration of Charles the Second?

A. He at first absconded, but by the interest of Sir William Davenant, whose life he had for-



merly saved, he received the benefit of the Act of Indemnity ; his political writings were burnt by the common hangman.

Q. When did his most celebrated work, "Paradise Lost," make its appearance ?

A. He finished this exquisite poem in 1665, during his retirement at Chalfont St. Giles, in Buckinghamshire, to avoid the plague then raging in London.

Q. Was this a hasty production ?

A. No ; on the contrary, it occupied his attention during a long series of years, great part of it was composed after he became totally blind, his daughter acting as his *amanuensis*.

Q. Did he derive great emolument from this noble effort of genius ?

A. He received, at three different payments, fifteen pounds in the whole, and his widow sold her claim for an additional eight pounds ; in so low an estimation was that work held, on the embellishment only of which, thousands have been since expended.

Q. What was his last work ?

A. About three years after, he produced his "Samson Agonistes," and "Paradise Regained," a fine poem, but not considered of equal merit with the Paradise Lost.

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Amanuensis, s. a person who writes what another dictates.

Q. When did he die, and where was he interred?

A. Worn out with the gout and other infirmities, he expired without a struggle on the 10th of November, 1674, in the 66th year of his age. He was interred in St. Giles's church, Cripplegate, and a monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey.

Q. Was Milton more than once married?

A. Yes, three times; his last wife survived him.

Q. What was the character of Milton?

A. His demeanour was open and affable; his conversation easy, cheerful, and instructive. Eminent for readiness of wit, he could be facetious, grave, and satirical, as the subject of conversation required; his judgment was just and profound; his learning was immense. He was a perfect master of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish. His style has been frequently imitated, but never equalled.

Q. What may we learn from this narrative?

A. One thing amongst many others: that next to religion, learning affords us the greatest consolation under adverse circumstances, and is frequently of the most essential service when other resources fail.

## CHAPTER XII.

*Joseph Addison.*

Q. Who was Addison?

A. He was son to the dean of Lichfield, and born at Milston, a few miles from Salisbury, in Wiltshire, in the year 1672.

Q. Where was he educated?

A. He received the rudiments of his education from a private tutor; he was then removed to Salisbury, Lichfield, and the Charter House, and finished his education at Queen's and Magdalen colleges, Oxford.

Q. What brought Addison first into notice?

A. Some English poems which he published, particularly one on a campaign of king William's, addressed to the lord-keeper Somers; by this nobleman's patronage he obtained a pension of three hundred pounds annually, which enabled him to make the tour of Europe.

Q. Was his muse idle during his travels?

A. By no means: his political epistle to lord Halifax, written during his stay in Italy, is one of the most finished productions of his genius, and its beauties have occasioned it to be translated into several languages.

Q. When did he return to England?

A. In 1703, when his political friends being

removed from power, he lost his pension, and fortune seemed to frown on him.

Q. On what occasion did she again smile?

A. Having, at the request of lords Godolphin and Halifax, celebrated the victory of Blenheim, in a poem worthy of its theme, he was rewarded with the place of commissioner of appeals. Next year he published his travels, which by real judges of merit were justly admired.

Q. What post did he next acquire?

A. In 1706, he was made under secretary of state, and in 1709 he accompanied the marquis of Wharton, lord-lieutenant of Ireland, as his secretary, and was created keeper of the records in that kingdom.

Q. Did the duties of these situations put an end to his literary pursuits?

A. No; he assisted Steele in "The Tatler," a change of ministry soon after taking place, by which he lost his employment, he commenced his celebrated work "The Spectator," in concert with his before-mentioned friend; a work that will continue to instruct and improve as long as the English language exists.

Q. Was this his only periodical work?

A. No; the "Guardian" soon after followed, to which he was a principal contributor; in 1713, he produced the admired tragedy of Cato. It



was performed thirty-five nights successively, and is perhaps still better calculated to please in the closet than on the stage.

Q. Did Addison again engage in public life?

A. On the death of the queen he was made secretary to the regency, established until the arrival of George the First; and having advocated the cause of government in a paper entitled "The Freeholder," he was made one of the lords of trade.

Q. Was he ever married?

A. In 1716, he married the countess dowager of Warwick, after a long and anxious courtship; but the little affection and respect he experienced from his wife, gave him poignant uneasiness, and his happiness was not increased by this splendid alliance.

Q. Did he enjoy any farther promotion?

A. In 1717, he was made secretary of state, but finding himself unequal to the duties of his office, he resigned it, and retired on a pension of 1,500*l.* per annum.

Q. What was his conduct in retirement?

A. He planned and executed many works of public utility, but unhappily engaging in a political contest with Sir Richard Steele, that friendship which had been so intimate for many years was from that time dissolved.

Q. Did he long survive this unfortunate occurrence ?

A. No ; an asthma to which he had been long subject, being now aggravated by a dropsy, he foresaw his speedy dissolution ; and dismissing his physicians, resigned all hopes of life.

Q. Is there any thing remarkable related of him in his dying moments ?

A. Sending for the young earl of Warwick, who was of a dissipated turn, he grasped his hand, and gently exclaiming, " See in what peace a Christian can die," expired immediately. This event happened in 1719.

Q. What was the character of Addison ?

A. It is justly observed of him, that he always employed his wit on the side of religion, restored virtue to her true dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed—to have purified intellectual pleasures ; separated mirth from obscenity, and wit from licentiousness ; and converted many from vice and folly, which is the greatest fecility that genius can attain. This he did attain, and his fame will remain to the latest posterity.

Q. What may we learn from the life of Addison ?

A. That eminent desert will frequently be rewarded with eminence of station ; and likewise,

that the most shining talents will not qualify us to excel in every sphere. As a writer Addison was memorable: as a secretary of state almost contemptible.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### *Sir Isaac Newton.*

Q. Who was Sir Isaac Newton?

A. One of the greatest philosophers and mathematicians that the world ever produced; he was descended from an ancient family, who had possessed the manor of Wolsthorp, near Grantham, in Lincolnshire, for nearly three centuries, and at this place he was born on Christmas-day, 1642.

Q. Where was he educated?

A. His uncle finding in him a propensity to mathematical learning, sent him to Trinity college, Cambridge, where he made such progress, that he had laid the foundation of his two most celebrated works, his "Principia," and his "Optics," before he had completed his twenty-fourth year.

Q. Did he publish these works soon after?

A. No; he examined every part of his theories with rigorous severity, and waited till his

judgment was more matured, before he submitted them to the world at large.

Q. Did he acquire any academical honours?

A. On the resignation of Dr. Barrow, he was chosen mathematical professor, in 1669, before which time he had discovered the doctrine of fluxions. The same year he read a course of lectures on optics, and communicated many curious observations to the Royal Society.

Q. How did he become known to the world at large?

A. In 1687, he published his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, under the auspices of the Royal Society, and no sooner were his principles understood than they extorted general assent to their truth, and every country where science was cultivated, was unanimous in his praise.

Q. What public office was conferred on him about this time?

A. He was appointed, in 1696, warden of the mint, and in 1699, promoted to the mastership, which situation he retained to the end of his life, and discharged the duties of it with the strictest attention to his country's advantage.

Q. What other marks of distinction were bestowed on him?

A. In 1703, he was chosen president of the



Royal Society, whose chair was never more respectably occupied; he had been previously elected a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris.

Q. What work of importance did he next publish?

A. In 1704, his Treatise on Optics appeared; and while in his fluxions, and application of the principle of gravity to the solar system, he may have profited in some small degree from the hints of others, yet for his theory of colours and other branches of his optics, the world is indebted to him alone, as the discoverer and finisher.

Q. What honours did he receive in consequence of these valuable discoveries?

A. He received the honour of knighthood from queen Anne in 1705, and during the reign of her successor, he received the most flattering attention from Caroline, princess of Wales, who considered it no small happiness to live in the same age with Sir Isaac Newton.

Q. Did he escape the envy and malice of his contemporaries?

A. His singular modesty shielded him greatly, though not entirely; but in general the *obloquy*

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Ob'loquy, s. slander, blame, reproach.

attempted to be fixed upon him *recoiled* upon the assailant, or proved totally harmless.

Q. Was Sir Isaac ever married?

A. No; he probably considered that the cares attendant on a family, were inimical to that tranquillity of mind and quiet which his *abstruse* studies required.

Q. When did he die, and where was he interred?

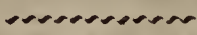
A. He died in 1726, after a long and painful illness, in the 85th year of his age, and was honoured with a splendid funeral, and a monument in Westminster Abbey.

Q. What was the character of Sir Isaac Newton?

A. He was endowed with such sagacity, penetration, energy of mind, and diligence, that the *arcana* of nature seemed to be laid open to him. Yet his modesty was equal to his genius, for he disclaimed all pretensions to superior talents. His temper was remarkably mild and even, not to be ruffled by ordinary accidents.

Q. What may we learn from this narrative?

A. That the highest literary and scientific



Recoil' *v.* to rush or bound back, to shrink.  
 Abstru'se, *a.* obscure, not easily understood.  
 Arca'na, *s.* secrets.

attainments are not *incompatible* with genuine modesty; and that, so far are ostentation and vanity from raising us in the esteem of the world, they have in general a contrary effect, and modest merit will always in the end be preferred.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

*Doctor Samuel Johnson.*

Q. WHO was Samuel Johnson?

A. A man who has been emphatically called the *leviathan* of literature; he was born at Lichfield in the year 1709. His father was a bookseller, in no very flourishing circumstances.

Q. Where was he educated?

A. At the grammar-school of his native city, at Stourbridge, and at Pembroke College, Oxford, where he soon displayed the superiority of his genius, in a Latin translation of Pope's "Messiah," which established his fame as a classical scholar, and procured him a compliment from the author.

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Incompat'ible, *a.* inconsistent, not to be reconciled with.  
 Levi'athan, *s.* a large water animal. Figuratively, a monster.

Q. Did this reputation tend to his emolument?

A. No; he found his circumstances so straitened that he could not even make a decent appearance, and his father's *insolvency* completed his distress, so that, after a residence of three years, he was obliged to leave the University.

Q. What resources had he at this time?

A. Returning to Lichfield, he subsisted for some time on the hospitality of benevolent friends; but this degrading dependance so preyed on his mind, that he seemed approaching towards insanity, and this *morbid* melancholy never wholly left him in his most prosperous circumstances.

Q. Did he procure any employment?

A. He gladly accepted the post of usher, at a school in Market Bosworth, but soon found this situation intolerable. He then commenced writing paragraphs for a newspaper, and a translation of Lobo's voyage to Abyssinia, for which he received five guineas.

Q. Were his circumstances at all improved by these undertakings?



Insol'vency, *s.* the state in which a person is not able to pay his debts.

Mor'bid, *a.* in a state contrary to health; dead.



A. No; but marrying the widow of a mercer, at Birmingham, he received with her eight hundred pounds, which rendered him, for a time, comparatively independent.

Q. What was his next attempt?

A. To establish a boarding-school near Lichfield, but it met with little success.

Q. What plan did he adopt on this disappointment?

A. He determined to try his fortune in London, and in 1737 set out in company with Garrick for that metropolis.

Q. Did he meet with immediate encouragement there?

A. Not to any considerable degree; his principal resource arose from his contributions to the Gentleman's Magazine, but this was by no means equal to his support; his tragedy of Irene was rejected at the theatres, and in consequence he soon felt pecuniary distress.

Q. By what means did he become known to the public?

A. He published a poem in imitation of Juvenal, entitled, "London," which procured him fame, though it contributed but little to his emolument.

Q. What was his next work of consequence?

A. In 1749, he engaged as a critic and com-

mentator on Shakspeare, and published the plan of his great English Dictionary, for which Dodsley and other booksellers contracted, at the price of fifteen hundred guineas.

Q. Did he exclusively devote himself to the great work?

A. No; at intervals he brought out his celebrated periodical paper, "The Rambler," which though rather unpopular at first, he afterwards had the pleasure to see run through many editions, and translated into foreign languages.

Q. Of what nature was this publication?

A. On the plan of the Spectator, and it abounded with the purest morals, and the justest sentiments; in short, it was sufficient of itself to establish his reputation as a fine writer and a good man.

Q. Did he experience any assistance from the learned in compiling his dictionary?

A. It appears that this arduous undertaking was completed by himself alone, and will remain a stupendous monument of labour, talents, and genius; it was received immediately on its publication with the warmest approbation, and Johnson was presented with the degree of Master of Arts.

Q. Did he not begin from this time to enjoy affluence, and relaxation from his labours?

A. Though his fame was now established, and he was caressed and listened to by the learned and the great, he was not able to emerge from poverty and dependence. His "Idler" and "Rasselas" procured him temporary supplies; but it was from the royal bounty that he enjoyed the means of living in learned ease, or attending only to voluntary labour.

Q. What was the amount of his pension?

A. Three hundred pounds per annum, bestowed on him as a reward for his productions, which had been so honourable to his country, and useful to mankind.

Q. How did he conduct himself on this happy change of circumstances?

A. He gave full scope to the natural *philanthropy* of his disposition, and relieved the distressed to the utmost of his power. He enlarged his acquaintance, and assisted in establishing a literary club, formed of the most celebrated men of the age.

Q. When did he acquire his title of Doctor of Laws?

A. It was bestowed on him by the University of Dublin, in 1765. At the same time he formed an acquaintance with Mr. Thrale, in whose family

he spent the happiest hours of his life, and whose widow afterwards became one of his biographers.

Q. Did he publish any other works?

A. In 1777, he undertook the "Lives of the English Poets," which he completed in 1781, without any appearance of the decline of his powers or deficiency of spirit.

Q. When did Johnson die, and where was he interred?

A. He died on the 13th of December, 1784, and was interred in Westminster Abbey. A monument has been erected to his memory in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Q. What was the character of Dr. Johnson?

A. His life was a perpetual comment on his writings, which inculcate the purest principles of religion and virtue. Dignified in his mind, he scorned concealment or mystery. He spoke and wrote from his own impressions alone, conceded nothing through complaisance, and palliated nothing through fear.

Q. What may we learn from the life of this great man?

A. Never to despair in the most discouraging circumstances. Steadily to pursue any virtuous undertaking, assured that, however unpromising it may appear at the onset, Divine Providence will in the end bless our endeavours with success.



## CHAPTER XV.

*John Hampden.*

Q. WHO was Hampden?

A. He was a celebrated political character in the reign of Charles the First, and descended from an ancient and respectable family in Buckinghamshire?

Q. What was the cause of his attracting public notice?

A. Having refused to pay a tax which he considered unconstitutionally levied, the cause was tried at the King's Bench, which he conducted with such ability, that it raised his reputation, and he was looked on as a firm opposer of arbitrary power, and the champion of the people.

Q. In what manner was he afterwards distinguished?

A. At the commencement of the civil wars, he took the command of a regiment of foot, under the earl of Essex, and shewed the most undaunted bravery; but he was cut off by a mortal wound which he received in a skirmish with the king's forces under prince Rupert, at Chalgrove-field, in Oxfordshire, June 18, 1643, in the forty-ninth year of his age.

Q. Has not the character of Hampden been very differently represented ?

A. Yes ; while some have eulogized him as the true lover of his country and the zealous defender of the people's rights, others have stigmatized him as a traitor to his king, and the subverter of the laws.

Q. What was his character as a private individual ?

A. He possessed very considerable talents, and was surpassed by none in industry or vigilance ; in personal courage no one could exceed him ; he was temperate and abstemious, and had an absolute command over all his passions.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### *Oliver Goldsmith.*

Q. WHO was Oliver Goldsmith ?

A. He was an eminent poet and miscellaneous writer, born in Ireland in the year 1728. His father was a virtuous and respectable minister of the church of England, in the county of Roscommon.

Q. What incidents are there in his life worthy of notice ?

A. The life of a man of literature is not often distinguished by striking incidents or wonderful events, but Goldsmith being of an unsettled turn, and little inclined to application, met with more adventures than usually fall to the lot of an author.

Q. Relate them.

A. Having incurred the displeasure of one of the masters of Dublin College, and received a chastisement which his spirit could not brook, he abruptly left college, and commenced a wanderer, without friends and without money. At length he was reduced to such extremity of hunger, that a handful of grey peas which a girl gave him at a wake, was relished by him as a luxurious meal.

Q. Did he long continue in so degrading a situation?

A. No; having acquainted his brother with his distress, he immediately clothed him, carried him back to college, and effected a reconciliation between him and his tutor; but throughout life, his thoughtless disposition betrayed him into many unpleasant and ludicrous situations, which the limits of this sketch will not permit us to record.

Q. What profession did he follow?

A. Having studied medicine and anatomy at Leyden, and taken a doctor's degree at Padua, he practised physic on his return to this country ; but owing to his habitual indolence and want of application, he never arrived at any degree of eminence in his profession.

Q. What work first established his fame as a poet.

A. "The Traveller," a poem written by him during his travels in Switzerland, and addressed to his brother ; but the appearance of that beautiful poem, "The Deserted Village," completely eclipsed all his contemporaries.

Q. Did he not distinguish himself as an historian, essayist, novelist, and dramatic writer ?

A. Yes ; his Histories of England, Greece and Rome, and his History of the Earth and Animated Nature, are proofs of his talents in that species of literature. "The Citizen of the World," speaks for him as a writer of essays ; and the inimitable picture of living manners, portrayed in "The Vicar of Wakefield," stamps his celebrity of a novelist. As a dramatic writer he was less successful.

Q. What was his character ?

A. He was generous in the extreme ; and while he shewed the greatest concern for the dis-



tresses of others, he was so inattentive to his own necessities, that he was continually embarrassed, and his life was consequently rendered miserable.

Q. When did he die?

A. He died in 1772, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and was privately interred in the Temple burying-ground; but by a subscription raised among his friends, a monument was afterwards erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### *Captain Cook.*

Q. Who was Captain Cook?

A. James Cook, generally known by the title of Captain Cook, was a British naval officer, distinguished as the most able navigator and discoverer that this or any other country can boast of. He was born at Marton, in Yorkshire, and descended from humble parents.

Q. What account have we of his entrance into a maritime life.

A. That being apprenticed to a shopkeeper in a small town upon the coast, he evinced such a

desire to embrace a sea-faring life, that he procured a discharge from his indentures, and went on board a coasting vessel, from which, at the commencement of the war with France in 1755, he volunteered into the King's service, on board the Eagle, commanded by Sir Hugh Palliser.

Q. Did he not speedily obtain promotion?

A. Yes; his ability and industry as a seaman were soon noticed by the captain, and he obtained a warrant for the post of master, in 1759, and joined sir C. Saunders' fleet, in the reduction of Quebec. Here he performed a very great service in taking soundings, and in making an accurate chart of the river St. Lawrence, though it is well known that before this time he had never attempted to draw a chart or map of any kind.

Q. What gave rise to his voyages round the world?

A. Two voyages having been previously undertaken by captains Byron and Wallis, a spirit of maritime discovery was excited in this country; and Captain Cook's nautical skill caused him to be selected for the purpose of undertaking another.

Q. How did he succeed?

A. He made many discoveries in the Pacific

Ocean, and contributed much to our geographical knowledge. The science of astronomy was also indebted to him for his observation of the transit of Venus, which happened that year.

Q. Did he not subsequently undertake two voyages for the purpose of farther discoveries?

A. Yes; in doing which he encountered the greatest dangers, and eventually lost his life at Owhyhee, one of the Sandwich islands.

Q. How did this happen?

A. The inhabitants of this island, who were savages, had such a propensity for thieving, that they took every opportunity of plundering the ship, and at length had the audacity to steal the long-boat belonging to the Resolution (Captain Cook's ship), which so incensed the gallant commander, that he went on shore with an armed force to seize their king and demand its restitution.

Q. Did he regain it?

A. No; on landing he was received by the natives with their usual respect, but as soon as he had got possession of their king, and began to insist upon his accompanying him on board, a crowd of savages rushed on, and attacked the English with daggers, stones, and clubs. Captain Cook endeavoured to appease their fury,

but he unfortunately fell covered with wounds, and his body was dragged off in triumph.

Q. What was the character of Captain Cook ?

A. His appearance and address were plain, his manners simple and modest ; in temper he was rather hasty, but his heart was excellent, and he possessed a fund of benevolence, and a strict regard to equity. His reputation as a circumnavigator was extremely high all over Europe, and he was universally regarded as one of the greatest men of the age.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *Edward, surnamed the Black Prince.*

Q. WHO was Edward the Black Prince ?

A. He was the eldest son of Edward III. king of England, and was born in the year 1330.

Q. Why was he called the Black Prince ?

A. From the colour of his armour, which was black.

Q. For what was he remarkable ?

A. He was equally distinguished for undaunted valour, humanity, and generosity ; and his whole character was that of a perfect hero.



Q. What were his first exploits?

A. At the age of fifteen he accompanied his father on his invasion of France, and received from him the honour of knighthood; and at the battle of Cressy, he fought with a valour that gave an example to the bravest men in the army.

Q. What did he gain by the victory which he obtained?

A. The approbation and thanks of the king his father and the whole army. It was on this occasion that he assumed the crest of ostrich feathers, and motto of *Ich Dien* (*I Serve*), belonging to the King of Bohemia, who was slain in that battle, and which the princes of Wales have ever since borne.

Q. What were his next achievements?

A. In 1355 he laid waste some of the finest provinces of France; and in the following year, with an army of 12,000 men, he defeated the king of France at the head of an army of 60,000, in the memorable battle of Poitiers, and took the king himself prisoner.

Q. Has not his treatment of the French monarch been justly celebrated for its magnanimity?

A. Yes; on the king's being conducted to Edward's tent, the young prince came forth to

meet him with every expression of sympathy and respect; he waited behind him at table, and treated him every way more like a superior than his captive.

Q. Did he ever ascend the English throne?

A. No; his father survived him; for owing to his long and continued exertions, his health became impaired, and after lingering some time, he died on the 8th of June, 1376, in the 46th year of his age.

Q. Did he leave any children?

A. Yes; an only son, afterwards king Richard the Second.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### *Queen Elizabeth.*

Q. Who was Queen Elizabeth?

A. Elizabeth, queen of England, was the daughter of Henry the Eighth, by his queen Anne Boleyn.

Q. When was she born, and how educated?

A. She was born in 1533, and was educated in the principles of the Protestant religion, and also in those classical studies which at that period

it was customary to teach females of distinction.

Q. When did she come to the throne?

A. On the death of her sister, Queen Mary, during whose reign she had suffered many severities on account of her religious tenets.

Q. What was her first public act on her being proclaimed queen?

A. She repaired to the Tower, where on her knees she returned thanks to heaven for her deliverance from the dangers which had surrounded her, and she magnanimously consigned to oblivion all the affronts she had received during the late reign.

Q. Did not the Spaniards attempt to invade England during the reign of Elizabeth?

A. Yes; the most formidable fleet that ever put to sea, called the *Invincible Armada*, sailed from the ports of Spain, having a numerous army on board, and approached the British shores; but the British navy under the command of the gallant admirals Effingham and Drake, aided by the winds, so completely routed and dispersed this immense force, that more than half were either taken, burnt, or sunk.

Q. How did Elizabeth and the English nation behave on this memorable occasion?

A. Elizabeth exerted all her energy to infuse confidence and attachment into her subjects. She rode through the camp at Tilbury, with a cheerful and undaunted demeanour, and addressed her troops in the most heroic language. The English were not backward in seconding her, for all orders of her subjects were animated by loyalty, and zealously concurred in every means of defence; but happily for the nation the defeat of the Armada rendered their services unnecessary.

Q. Did not the captivity and execution of Mary, queen of Scots, reflect on the character of Elizabeth?

A. There was certainly a degree of severity in her behaviour to that unfortunate queen which no circumstances could justify; and it can only be palliated from believing the charges true that were brought against her, namely, that of conspiring with others to subvert Elizabeth's government.

Q. Did not Elizabeth affect great sorrow when she heard that Mary had been executed?

A. Yes; and imprisoned her secretary Davison for delivering the warrant, as being contrary to her orders.

Q. Relate the circumstance of the death of the earl of Essex, who was beheaded for trea-



son, and the effect it produced on the queen's mind.

A. Essex, who had been a great favourite at court, at times forgot the respect due to his sovereign, and on one occasion was severely reprimanded by the queen; this his haughty temper could not brook, and he rashly engaged in a treasonable attempt against the government, for which he suffered. Elizabeth's grief on the death of her favourite was so great, that rejecting all consolation, and refusing to take any sustenance, she soon died.

Q. What may be considered an impartial character of this celebrated queen?

A. Her personal qualities were highly instrumental to the prosperity of her administration. She was possessed of prudence, judgment, fortitude, vigour, industry, and frugality. On the other hand she is admitted to have been haughty and impetuous, impatient of contradiction, and open to flattery. But while she governed with almost absolute authority, she studied to gain, and possessed, the affection of her subjects.

Q. Was not her reign one of the most splendid in English history?

A. Yes; the nation made an astonishing progress in arts, sciences, and commerce. Her

navy reigned triumphant, and her empire was extended by conquests in various parts of the globe. So great indeed was the national prosperity, that this reign has been emphatically denominated the golden era of Britain.

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